

# POLE

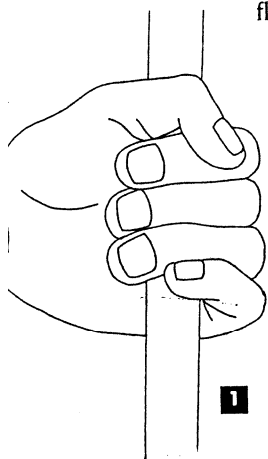
## part 1

# SPINNING

Ever tried to spin a stick? As there is only one object to control, pole spinning is much easier than juggling. Just find a long-to-medium length stick, such as a 1-metre broom handle (a devil stick will do), and space to practise.

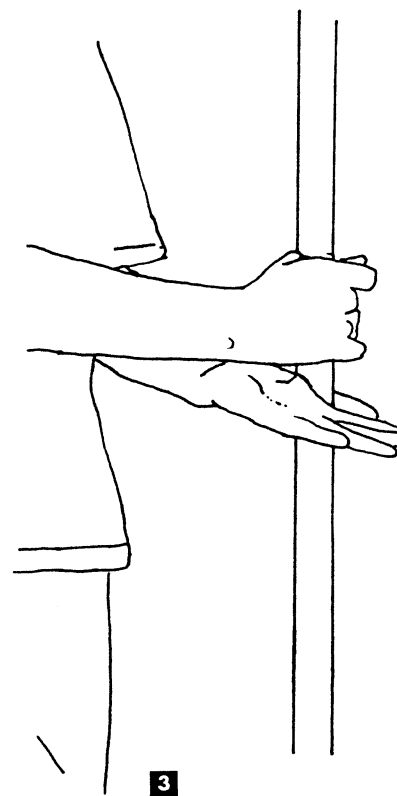
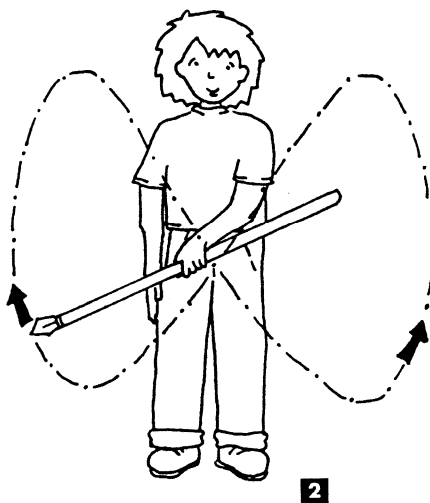
First, warm up your shoulders and wrists. Then, hold the centre of your pole inside your strongest hand in the notch between thumb and forefinger (see Figure 1). Many of the fastest moves involve flexing the wrist, rather than twirling through fingertips.

Try each of the following family of tricks with each hand and with both directions of pole spin. The figures are snapshots in time and represent the correct position of the body only at that moment. I have drawn a spearhead to distinguish the leading end, which has arrows and a future path trail. You could use coloured tape to mark the leading end nearest to the thumb, i.e. the top end in Figure 1.



### FIGURE-8 SWEEPS

A good starting position is with the pole held vertically directly in front of you. Turn your palm down as your whole arm swings across the body to sweep the pole past the opposite hip. Then, twist your wrist so that the palm is upwards on returning to its own side. This action sweeps the pole forward so that the leading end alternates inside and outside that arm, past each hip in a sideways figure-8 (∞ - infinity sign) as in Figure 2. The figure-8 curves behind the body at each side.



With practice, this pattern can be made at high speed and is an impressive trick. Stand side-on to the audience for full circular effect. Try starting with a backwards sweep, bringing the leading end towards, and past, that side's shoulder.

A more difficult variation is with one arm held straight out to the side. To make a figure-8 pattern at shoulder level, you must hold the pole loosely with just your thumb and first finger touching in a "ring" grip. The arm stays still and the wrist turns the hand in a small figure-8 from "palm down to palm up". The hardest aspect of this pattern is getting the leading end to travel in a vertical plane behind the shoulder. A loose grip will allow the pole's momentum to carry it behind the body so that full circles can be seen from the front. With practice, you will be able to simultaneously spin a pole in each hand. These moves look fantastic with flags or fire poles!

## BASIC FIGURE-8 EXCHANGE

To swap hands from a forward figure-8 sweep, wait until your arm is right across your body. When the pole is vertical in front, take the pole in the centre with the other hand palm up.

The lower hand in Figure 3 is about to take the pole. As you exchange, restart the figure-8 motion. Be sure to swing your hand across and past your other hip to avoid hitting yourself.

## FIGURE-8 UNDER-ARM EXCHANGE

Using half a forward figure-8 sweep, place the long end of the staff under your opposite armpit. Look at the top end.

Your other hand then grasps the pole (off centre) above the shoulder using a "palm up grip", Figure 4.

Release the first hand and swing down into a figure-8.

Imagine the motion of taking the pole from behind the shoulder as similar to plucking an arrow from a quiver strapped to an archer's back.

Swing another half-cycle of a forward figure-8 to place the pole under the opposite armpit and continue. This pattern feels great and can be done very fast whilst moving.

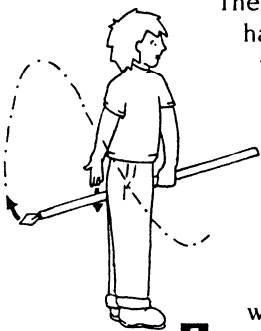
Notice that a cycle is still a figure-8 on its side (i) with the pole moving from the front to the back of the body on the outside arcs of the pattern as it does in Trick 1. Try reversing the pattern. Begin with a figure-8 sweep backwards and place the long end of the pole vertically over the same side's shoulder. The other hand reaches diagonally across the front of the body and takes it from under the opposite armpit with a strong "knuckles up, thumbs up" grip. Continue with half a backward figure-8 and place over the other shoulder.



## BETWEEN THE LEGS

Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart. Hold the pole's centre and begin forward figure-8's. Direct the leading end high between your legs.

Then, with the other hand, turn your wrist outwards and reach for the centre of the pole behind the body (Figure 5). Release the first hand and continue forward figure-8 sweeps.



What next?

Part 2 in this pole spinning workshop series will describe the front propeller spins with a mini helicopter and the spectacular Chinese Back-Bend!

Stick spinning is closely related to club swinging as both skills rely on strong, flexible wrists and an understanding of the directions of circles in planes around the body. The majority of swinging patterns (particularly those with two circles) can be done equally well with a pole as a club including reels, turns, waist wraps, fountains and snakes. More tricks are explained in my book 'Modern Club Swinging and Pole Spinning' which is published by Butterfingers.

Anna Jillings, York, England

*From more workshops like this get the book:*

**Modern Club Swinging  
and Pole Spinning**

Butterfingers 1994. ISBN 0 9513240 8 X. © Anna Jillings

Download the entire book for free from:

**[www.cosmosjugglers.co.uk](http://www.cosmosjugglers.co.uk)**

See the *Holidays* pages for Anna's annual May and August UK events for club swingers, poi & pole spinners, jugglers, fire enthusiasts and glow-in-the dark/UV performers.